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SUBJECT: REPORT ON SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
ACTIVISTS

REF: A. STATE 44903

[B.](#) 2007 STATE 88465

[C.](#) 2007 STATE 108924

[D.](#) 2007 JERUSALEM 2208

[E.](#) 2007 JERUSALEM

[1.](#) (SBU) Summary. Per reftel, Post is supporting democracy and human rights activists in the West Bank and Gaza and expansion of personal freedoms through regular meetings with human rights activists and organizations, programmatic support to Palestinian civil society, and a concerted media campaign (ref A). This report summarizes Post's efforts to implement the President's Freedom Agenda through dialogue with democracy and human rights activists and offers highlights and an overview of these efforts from April 2007 to May 2008. End Summary.

Reaching Out to Democracy
and Human Rights Activists

[2.](#) (SBU) Since April 2007, ConGen officers have met with a broad range of human rights and civil society activists and democratic political leaders from the West Bank and Gaza. During these meetings, ConGen officers expressed strong USG support for activists' efforts to build a more democratic and secure future for Palestinians. Examples of these efforts include regular meetings in Jerusalem and the West Bank with the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, International Committee of the Red Cross, Arab Studies Society, Jerusalem Center for Women, and a variety of other local and international groups.

MEPI Programmatic Support

[3.](#) (SBU) Post has developed and administers wide-ranging Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and Public Diplomacy programs to support the goals of achieving greater personal freedoms and improved democratic systems. Post has a full-time MEPI coordinator who meets regularly with civil society activists and local and international NGOs to monitor existing programs and develop new programs. Through MEPI programming, Post supports a portfolio of more than \$15 million in assistance to strengthen political parties, empower women, and develop an active civil society that advocates for good governance and critical personal freedoms. Current MEPI programming includes \$150,000 in small grants for six civil society organizations that educate Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem on their rights, confront honor crimes in Gaza, and empower youth throughout the West Bank. Post just completed this year's small grant competition and will fund 11 new projects focused on civic engagement of youth in under-served communities for a total of \$300,000.

PD Programmatic Support

14. (SBU) Post's MEPI programs complement a robust Public Diplomacy outreach and program campaign to support democracy and human rights activists. These efforts include visiting speaker programs, digital video conferences (DVC) with American speakers, including an April 3 DVC between Palestinian imams and American Muslim leader Ihsan al-Khatib on religious freedom. PD also organized a March 18 DVC for Palestinians with American civil rights leader Dr. Bert Ransom on nonviolence. In December 2007, PD gave a small grant to the Teacher Creativity Center, which strives to eliminate violence from schools by encouraging the integration of human rights education into Palestinian school curriculum.

15. (SBU) PD programming also included exchange programs that build skills, networks, and exposure of civil society and democracy leaders. Post sent Rafeef Mughaid, attorney at al-Haq Human Rights Center in Ramallah, to the U.S. on a "Human Rights Advocacy and Awareness" International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) in November 2007. In October 2007, human rights lawyer Ala'a Ghanayim participated in a "Judicial System" IVLP. Upon their return, ConGen officers met with Ghanayim and Mughaid to discuss how they are using their new skills to promote human rights in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Media Outreach

16. (SBU) On May 2, PAO sent a letter to 250 Palestinian journalists commemorating World Press Freedom Day and

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reiterating U.S. support for the freedoms of press and speech. On May 3, PAO also contributed an op-ed to al-Quds newspaper, the largest Palestinian daily, which highlighted the importance of press freedom as a "necessary element in any free society" and applauded Palestinian journalists for their "commitment to providing the Palestinian people with the information they need to support a democratic society."

Upcoming Plans

17. (SBU) Post will continue to meet with democracy and human rights activists and organizations to reinforce U.S. support for democratic institutions in a future Palestinian state and will report on these meetings. Post will also continue to administer and support MEPI and Public Diplomacy programming that advances freedom and democracy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
WALLES